R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 014 350 RC 001 909

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION.

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PUB DATE 23 OCT 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.60 13P.

DESCRIPTORS- *ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, *CURRICULUM, *EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, *INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS, *INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF, LANGUAGE ARTS, SCIENCES, SOCIAL STUDIES, FINE ARTS, MATHEMATICS, HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SKILLS, ORAL COMMUNICATION, COMPOSITION (LITERARY), DECISION MAKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, CREATIVE THINKING, INDEPENDENT STUDY, SCHOOL BUILDINGS, GUIDANCE PROGRAMS, HEALTH SERVICES, SPECIAL EDUCATION, PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, PSYCHOTHERAPY,

REVISION OF THE ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM FOR MORE BALANCE, FLEXIBILITY, AND ARTICULATION WILL HELP IT MEET THE IMPACT OF SCIENTIFIC, TECHNOLOGICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC CHANGES, ACCORDING TO THE AUTHOR. EVERY SCHOOL SHOULD PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING SERVICES--A GUIDANCE PROGRAM, HEALTH SERVICES, SPECIAL EDUCATION, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES, AND AN INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CENTER. IT WAS EMPHASIZED THAT EACH STUDENT SHOULD DEVELOP SKILLS IN ORAL COMMUNICATION, COMPOSITION, DECISION MAKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, CREATIVE THINKING, COMPUTATION, AUTO INSTRUCTION, AND INDEPENDENT STUDY. TO AID IN IMPLEMENTATION OF SERVICES, EXPLANATIONS OF THE FOLLOWING ARE OFFERED--LANGUAGE ARTS, SCIENCE, SOCIAL STUDIES, FINE ARTS, MATHEMATICS, HEALTH, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH A DESCRIPTION OF AN OPTIMUM EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM WHICH WOULD INCLUDE PROVISIONS FOR THE BASIC INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM, EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, ADEQUATE SCHOOL BUILDINGS, QUALIFIED INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF, AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP. (JS)

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ED014350

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

by

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October 23, 1967

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FORWARD

The impact of scientific, technological, social and economic change on the American way of life necessitate a re-examination of the educational system. These changes modify established needs and create new needs to be met by the public school system. Instructional programs and supporting services must be developed to meet these needs.

The primary purposes of school district organization are to make possible: (1) the desired quality or excellence of the programs and services; (2) the efficiency of the organization for providing the programs and services; and, (3) the economy of operation, or the returns received for the tax dollar invested in education.

Elementary education is one of many very important segments of the total educational operation. Dr. Rosalie Farley, The University of Nebraska, was invited to make an assessment of elementary education in relation to school district organization. This paper represents her analysis of the problem, following consultation with representative educational leaders in each of the four states.

The value of this paper rests upon its utilization by those with advisory and/or decision making responsibilities about the educational structure in each state. It represents a beginning point for further study and evaluation, and for establishing criteria upon which guidelines can be developed for effective and constructive school district organization.

Respectfully submitted,

Ralph D. Purdy, Director
Great Plains School District
Organization Project

October 23, 1967

REVIEWERS AND ADVISERS

The opportunity was provided for the review of the position paper in Elementary Education by representatives from each of the four states. This meeting was held on Saturday, September 16, 1967, in Lincoln, Nebraska. Comments and suggestions were given to Dr. Farley, after which the paper was revised to its present form.

Those serving as reviewers and advisers included the following:

Iowa:
Dr. Oliver Hinley, State Department of Education
Dr. James Wise, Des Moines Public Schools
Ellis Hanson, State Director for Iowa

Missouri:
Dr. James Cragmile, University of Missouri
Ray Roberts, State Department of Education
Neal Neff, Elementary School Principal, Tarkio, Missouri
Art Summers, State Director for Missouri

South Dakota:
Dr. Cecil Kipling, University of South Dakota
Mary Greenwood, President, South Dakota Elementary Principals Ass'n, Brookings
Earl Boxa, State Director for South Dakota

Nebraska:
Anne Christensen, former member of the Executive Committee DESP[1]
Dr. James May, Past President, DESP
Dr. Max Poole, University of Nebraska
Dr. Ward Sims, University of Nebraska
Dr. Russell McCreight (deceased), University of Nebraska
Dr. Frank Gorman, University of Omaha
Loren Brakenhoff, State Department of Education
Lyle Bargman, Elementary School Principal, Lincoln, Nebraska
Dr. William Schroeder, State Co-Director for Nebraska
Roger Farrar, State Co-Director for Nebraska
Roger Hanson, State Co-Director for Nebraska

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[1] DESP - Department of Elementary School Principals, Nebraska.

A MODERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

by

Rosalie W. Farley
and
Reviewed by O. W. Kopp

The major responsibility of the elementary school is met through the curriculum which is made available to each child. The curriculum must provide opportunities for boys and girls to grow and develop toward maturity. Crosby states:

> We need intellectual fulfillment for each child.
> We need a value system based . . . upon a recognition of the worthiness of all individuals.
> We need cooperative effort, with each contributing to the common good in light of his capabilities.[1]

Today, what we do for a child in the elementary school will influence his entire life. The educational program of the elementary school also provides the foundation for more advanced and specialized learning in the secondary school and post-high school programs.

Part A - The Curriculum

In designing a curriculum for the 1960's and the 1970's, planners must consider the changes which are occurring in society. A curriculum which was appropriate for the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's needs to be studied and revised in accordance with the socio-technological developments which have occurred during the past ten years. Cay states:

> The curriculum builder must be aware of the powerful contemporary forces now affecting the schools. Among these are influences as diverse as space travel, federal and state legislation, increased birth rate, desegregation, and international relations.[2]

The curriculum must be balanced, flexible, and articulated. A balanced curriculum offers a child an interrelated program. It develops the concepts which are interwoven without neglecting specific understandings. The social, economic, and political influences upon the lives of individuals must be understood, if positive human relationships are to be developed. During the past twenty years, national concerns have stressed the need for better understandings of scientific knowledges and technological changes. In the past few years, Congress has broadened the federal programs in education to include areas beyond the scientific technologies. A flexible curriculum provides for adjusting the learning experiences of a child in relationship to his needs, abilities, and talents. It provides experiences for the gifted or talented child, the child with handicaps, and the child who needs to explore situations upon an individual basis. The articulate curriculum is "the unification and coordination of learning experiences."[3] It provides for the continuity of learning experiences

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[1]Muriel Crosby, Curriculum Development for Elementary Schools in a Changing Society, (D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1964), page 8.
[2]Donald F. Cay, Curriculum; Design for Learning, (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., New York, 1966), page 16.
[3]Ibid., page 125.

throughout the school system--kindergarten through the twelfth grade. It eliminates unnecessary duplication, discards unnecessary experiences and adds new content at the level which it is needed.

Organization

The curriculum should be organized to permit a child to progress from early childhood to later years, toward a mature utilization and organization of knowledge. It should, also, help him to understand the "interrelationships and to achieve unity from the diversity of knowledge."[4] The decisions about the organization of the curriculum must be based upon the learner, the subject matter, and the educational objectives to be achieved.[5] Direction in planning learning experiences is given to teachers when they are involved in making decisions concerning organization and content of the curriculum. The teacher has a vital role in the quality of instruction provided in a local elementary school. It is important to provide for sound planning at the elementary school level.

Content

In 1953 the Mid-Century Committee on Outcomes in Elementary Education published a report which included the curriculum areas for the elementary school: physical development, health, body care; individual social and emotional development; ethical behavior, standards, values; social relations; the social world; the physical world; esthetic development; communication; and quantitative relationships.[6] The Educational Policies Commission stated in 1962: "The purpose which runs through and strengthens all other educational purposes--the common thread of education--is the development of the ability to think."[7]

A report of the President's Science Advisory Committee emphasized the stimulation of the desire to learn and the creation of intellectual skills. It stated:

> A good education fosters disinterested curosity and love of understanding but it also fosters the desire... to connect theory and practice, intelligence and conduct...today's children must be prepared to cope with new patterns of life,...they must be equipped with good information and trained in viable modes of thinking to create new solutions.[8]

The broad fields of the elementary school curriculum generally include programs in:

* language arts
* science
* social studies
* the fine arts
* mathematics
* health and physical education

The broad-fields arrangement provides for closely related subjects rather than stressing isolated subject areas. This arrangement assists a child to see the relationships between learnings in a general field.

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[4] _____ Deciding What to Teach, (NEA Project on Instruction, National Education Association, Washington, D. C., 1963), page 43.

[5] _____ From Bookshelves to Action, (National Education Association, Washington, D. C., 1964), page 19.

[6] Nolan C. Kearney, Elementary School Objectives, (Russel Sage Foundation, New York, 1953).

[7] Educational Policies Commission, The Central Purpose of American Education, (National Education Association, Washington, D. C., 1961), page 12.

[8] _____ Innovation and Experiment in Education, (President's Science Advisory Committee, Washington, D. C., 1964).

The language arts program includes the former subjects referred to as reading, language, spelling, and handwriting. One of the most important responsibilities of the elementary school has been to teach a child to read. Each child needs to develop his reading ability in relationship to his potentialities, rate of learning, and interests. "The modern approach to learning to read begins with the life experiences of the child, then the abstract symbols representing these experiences are introduced."[9] Today, less emphasis is placed upon memorizing and repeating words. Language activities are integrated into other areas of the elementary school curriculum. Oral and written language stresses (a) expression of ideas, (b) growth and development of the child, and (c) creativity. Listening is an integral part of the modern language arts program. A child develops listening skills which enables him to evaluate programs to which he listens, to detect partial truths, propaganda, and false claims. These skills assist him to summarize and explain what he has heard. Spelling, also, is a tool used in communication with emphasis being placed upon correctly spelling words which are written in each of the subject areas. Handwriting activities should grow out of the child's classroom activities with stress being placed upon legibility in all written work. Literature for the elementary school child is an important part of the language arts program. Books can help a child gain information, relieve tensions, enjoy vicariously experiences which enrich his life, develop sensivity to ways people live, and satisfy his sense of beauty. A child can gain insights into his own problems when he reads about the experiences of other persons. The introduction of a second language in the elementary school has been developing during the past few years. There is an increasing need for persons to be able to communicate in more than one language. The shifting of population and the interdependent world have aided in breaking through the language barrier.[10]

The social studies program includes the subject fields of history, geography, economics, political science, anthropology, and sociology. It enables a child to understand the historical developments of our nation, the form of government of our country and our economic system. It helps him to understand the relationship of our nation to others in the world. This program is primarily concerned with understanding man's relationship to his environment.

The science program enables children to "develop a knowledge and appreciation of science which will become the foundation for using and appreciating the contributions of science in daily living throughout their lives."[11] They learn to observe; to use science vocabulary; to perform simple experiments; to interpret, record, and report accurately; to distinguish between truth and superstition; and to associate and apply science with daily living. Science assists children in learning to live in the world about them and to understand themselves.

The arithmetic program is concerned with numbers and their meaning and quantitative relationships. Crosby states:

> Arithmetic is a language of quantity. When a child learns arithmetic he learns to use the language with which to think and communicate.[12]

A child increases his abilities to count, to measure, to compute, to estimate and to reason. The emphasis is placed upon the usefulness of arithmetic and its practical and scientific applications.

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[9] William B. Ragan, Modern Elementary Curriculum, (Holt, Rinehart, Winston; New York, 1966), page 251.
[10] Ibid., pages 266-276.
[11] Op. cit., Muriel Crosby, page 291.
[12] Op. cit., Muriel Crosby, page 390.

The health, physical education, and recreation program is concentrated upon physical fitness, physical and mental health, safety and recreation. This program requires a specialized staff in addition to the regular classroom teacher who incorporates the learning activities into the total curriculum.

The fine arts program is closely related to all of the learning experiences of a child and should be a part of his total experiences. He learns to express himself through music, art, and language. In curriculum planning, creativity is being emphasized not only in music, crafts and the fine arts but throughout the entire curriculum.

Basic Skills

Each student needs to develop skills in oral and written communication, decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, computations, competence in self-instruction and independent learning. Such skills enable him to apply understandings, knowledges, and skills in meeting the demands of the changing social and technological conditions. These learnings are developed over a period of years, being introduced in the early school experiences and refined throughout the more advanced years of his formal educational programs. Each skill is developed in accordance to the types of learning activities which the elementary school program makes available. For example, the decision making skills can be developed and refined only when opportunities are present which requires an examination of possible alternatives to a specific problem and whenever the student has the maturity to understand and determine the results of his particular choice of a possible alternative. The decision making skills should be introduced in the elementary school.

Skills for specific academic subject fields and vocational pursuits are dependent upon the skills which are introduced in the elementary school. For example, the development of reading skills increases the student's ability to interpret the written word. The skills in computing a chemical formula are based upon the ability to read and understand a special written symbol. The skills in vocational education are specialized in nature and dependent upon the ability to read. Throughout the formal educational experiences emphasis must be given to the development and practical use of the skills.

Development of Attitudes

Each child needs to recognize that an accumulation of facts and the acquisition of certain skills only partially equips him to meet the demands of society. He needs to acquire wholesome attitudes concerning

*him own dignity and worth,
*his role in society,
*his responsibilities in a democracy and,
*his contributions to others.

He needs opportunities

*to participate in group activities,
*to work independently,
*to experience successes, and
*to realize that failures can become beneficial.

The attitudes that a child develops in the elementary school influences his entire life.

Educational Services

A comprehensive educational program includes provisions for adjusted learning experiences through special services. Such services include programs for students in guidance and counseling, school health services, special education, psychological and psychiatric assistance, and instructional materials centers. Special services for teachers include assistance from specialists, counseling, and in-service education. Assistance to administrators and members of boards of education includes cooperative purchasing, data processing, legal assistance, counseling, and research projects. The general public is assisted through the interpretation of educational needs of the district, the clarification of board policies, the provisions for adult classes, and encouragement to participate in the programs of the elementary school

Guidance Program

Guidance in the elementary school is a process which is coordinated with the instructional program and which provides for the adjusted curriculum activities of an individual student in accordance with his potentialities, interests, and needs. The student, classroom teacher and specialist have specific roles that are interwoven and which cannot function effectively alone. The student must recognize his role in seeking solutions to his porblems, in developing acceptable means of self-control, and in securing knowledges and skills. The classroom teacher must recognize the specific needs and potentialities of each student under his guidance and should secure assistance from specialists as soon as the child encounters unusual learning problems. The specialist (elementary school principal, school nurse, psychologist, speech therapists, teacher-social worker, teachers in special education, and the specialist in academic subject areas) must provide the assistance which the regular classroom teacher is unable to offer. Each specialist is dependent upon the classroom teacher's ability and willingness to refer a student. Guidance in the elementary school emphasizes the adjustment of learning situations to the needs of the student. It is a day-by-day process which becomes the foundation for a more centralized program on the secondary school level. In the elementary school, each classroom teacher serves as a part of the guidance team.

School Health Services

School health services are a part of the learning experiences of an elementary school child. These services increase his knowledges concerning physical and mental health and assist in the development of wholesome attitudes and behavior in relation to health problems. Ragan states:

> School health services are provided through the cooperative efforts of the school, the local health department, parents, physicians, nurses, dentists, civic clubs, and other citizens of the community. These services are provided for the purpose of taking care of emergencies, preventing the spread of communicable diseases, discovering and correcting physical defects, and giving pupils and their parents the guidance they need in solving their own health problems.[13]

Special Education

The special education program provides for the atypical child making available learning activities for the gifted child, the physically handicapped child, the emotionally maladjusted child, and/or the mentally retarded child. Provisions are made for specialists to assist the classroom teacher whenever the child remains in

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[13] Op. cit., William B. Ragan, page 398.

the regular classroom and for instruction in special classes whenever it is to the advantage of the child to receive special assistance. The emphasis in the program is placed upon developing the potentialities of the individual and correcting those handicaps which can be remedied.

Psychological and Psychiatric Services

The psychologist and the psychiatrist are essential in the identification of specific needs and talents of a child and in the provisions for dealing with handicaps which interfere with his social and academic learning activities. These individuals can assist the classroom teacher in interpreting the reactions of a child and in recognizing the causes of specific behavior patterns. The early identification of behavior patterns of elementary school children influences their learning opportunities in later years.

Instructional Materials Center

In each school system, there should be a well-organized and professionally staffed instructional materials center. Such a center should consist of library materials and audiovisual equipment and should be under the direction of an individual who is knowledgeable in library science and audiovisual instruction. In each elementary school there should be a smaller instructional materials center which is available to students and teachers throughout the school day. This center should be conveniently located and should make available opportunities for group and individual research activities. The use of radio, television, video tapes, and other technological aids to instruction should be available in each elementary school program. These aids can be used in the regular classroom, but are used more effectively in the instruction of large groups or individual study.

Part B - Staffing Patterns

Each child in an elementary school is entitled to receive instruction under the guidance of a competent, professional classroom teacher--an individual who understands the process of individual growth and development, who is skilled in the teaching of reading, and who recognizes the needs of individual students. A qualified, non-teaching elementary school principal provides the leadership which is essential in the modern elementary school program. He assists the classroom teacher through the coordination of learning experiences and the provisions for instructional materials and equipment. Under his guidance the elementary school staff becomes an effective educational team. Each elementary school teacher is entitled to the assistance of professionally prepared specialists in the academic subject areas, physical and mental health, and special education.

The efficiency of the professional instructional team is dependent upon the competencies of the non-instructional staff. Clerical assistance is essential to the elementary school principal and teachers. The maintenance of the local school requires one or more custodians. Bus drivers, lunch-room personnel, school nurses, and any other member of the non-instructional staff must be persons who are concerned about the educational values of their assignments.

Part C - Organizational Patterns

Each local elementary school is an attendance center providing for the needs and interests of children from kindergarten through the sixth grade. It can function more effectively and efficiently as an integral part of an administrative district large enough to offer an educational program from the kindergarten through the twelfth grade, which includes the basic instructional program and any needed educational service.

A balanced, flexible, and articulated curriculum from the kindergarten through the twelfth grade may require several attendance centers (elementary and secondary) under the direction of one board of education and one school superintendent. Economies in the costs of education can be made when specialists can be made available to more than one attendance center. Long-range plans for meeting the needs of children in a geographic area can be formulated by a competent school administrator and an informed board of education. If, due to geographical reasons, several attendance centers cannot cooperate; then the needs must be met at the local level.

The responsibilities of a local board of education focus upon the quality of the comprehensive education program, the securing of a competent superintendent, the provisions for adequate physical facilities and instructional aids, and the cost of the educational program in relationship to the ability of the community to pay the costs. It is recognized that some local administrative districts will remain too small to offer all of the needed educational services (instructional and non-instructional) after the maximum amount of appropriate reorganization of local school districts has been completed. When the local administrative district is too small to provide all of the needed services, some of the educational services can be secured from another local administrative district and/or county or regional administrative unit. Some services can be provided more effectively and efficiently from a state or federal level. Two guidelines that need to be considered whenever a local board of education decides to secure an educational service from another administrative district or unit are:

* An educational service should be provided whenever one or more children need an adjusted educational program.
* The service should be offered on the administrative level which is the closest to the person to be served.

Through the cooperative relationships of educational administrators on the local, county, regional, state, and federal levels; every child can receive a high quality of education. Each educational administrator needs to recognize the role which he must assume and refer to another administrative level those functions and activities that can be offered more efficiently.

Optimum Programs

Each local board of education must decide the optimum educational program which it can justify. Prior to the making of these decisions, it is necessary for each member of the local board of education to recognize provisions of an optimum program. Studies and research projects have provided certain data that can be used as guidelines by the members of the local board of education.

Optimum Program for Elementary Schools

An educational program for an elementary school would include provisions for the basic instructional program, educational services, an adequate physical plant, qualified staff, and administrative leadership. Guidelines for an optimum elementary school program would include:

*A balanced, flexible, and articulated educational program from the kindergarten through the twelfth grade under the leadership of one superintendent of schools, a local board of education, and an elementary school principal;

*A sufficient number of attendance units located in geographical areas of the community which are convenient for the students who attend a particular school;

*Those educational services which are needed by a sufficient number of students in the local elementary school to justify the expenditure;

*Arrangements for additional educational services from another attendance unit or administrative level whenever specific services are not offered locally;

*A pupil-teacher ratio of approximately 25 to 1 and arrangements for grouping students in large or small groups and for individual instruction;

*Provisions for physical facilities for library services, educational television, physical education, health services, conference room, teachers' lounge and workroom, arrangement and space for academic specialists, special education, bus transportation and lunch-room facilities when necessary, after school and community activities, and arrangements and facilities for individual studies and research projects by professionally prepared educators.

Optimum Programs for Sparsely Settled Areas:

The minimum program for an adequate elementary school would be available in those geographical areas which have a sparsity of population and a limited number of students who needed an adjusted curriculum. Even in small elementary schools, the quality of education must remain on a high level under the direction of professionally qualified classroom teachers and a principal. An articulated program from the kindergarten through the twelfth grade is essential in small elementary attendance units. Such a program would function under the direction of one board of education and a superintendent of schools. This program would include:

*The basic instructional program with facilities for library-audiovisual services, health services, physical education, and lunch-room activities;

*Arrangements for additional educational services from another attendance and/or administrative unit;

*Arrangements for specialist in the academic subject areas from another attendance and/or administrative unit; and

*A pupil-teacher ratio of 20 to 1.

It is recognized that few elementary schools will categorically be grouped in one of these two groups. It is more probable that each board of education will determine the extent of the educational program using guidelines from each of the areas.

Summary

Each elementary school child is entitled to a high quality of education which includes the basic instructional program and educational services. He is entitled to the opportunities available in a well-planned curriculum which balances the emphasis in the academic subject fields and is developed for learning experiences from the kindergarten through the twelfth grade. He is entitled to a curriculum which places emphasis upon the desire and tools for learning without ignoring the basic academic facts. He is entitled to participate in learning situations planned for large and small groups, and individual learning. He needs a variety of instructional materials and aids that can challenge his curiosity and can develop his potentialities. He needs the guidance of competent teachers and specialists who are capable of determining appropriate educational activities in relationship to his abilities and maturity. A sound educational program does, indeed, begin in the elementary school.

It is essential that administrators on the local, county, regional and federal levels work cooperatively in providing learning experiences that can enrich the lives of each child in the elementary school. In those geographical areas which have a sparsity of population, the local board of education must make arrangements to secure the needed educational services from another administrative district or unit. There is no justification for a limited educational program because of a limited population.

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